



1. COTTONTAIL 4:56
D. Ellington
2. JOHNNY COME LATELY 4:47
B. Strayhorn
3. PERDIDO 8:38
Tizol - Drake - Langsfelder
4. IN A MELLOW TONE 6:58
D. Ellington
5. BOJANGLES 4:09
D. Ellington
6. ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM 5:36
D. Ellington
7. THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE 3:07
M. Ellington
8. STOMPY JONES 5:32
D. Ellington
9. COTTONTAIL 3:19
D. Ellington

1. Cottontail
2. Johnny Come Lately

Kenny Drew: piano
Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen: bass
Al Heath: drums
Recorded at Pori Jazzfestival, Finland,
July 14th, 1967

3. Perdido
4. In A Mellow Tone
- Teddy Wilson: piano*
Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen: bass
Makaya Ntsoko: drums

Recorded at Odd Fellow Palæet,
Copenhagen, 1969

5. Bojangles

Palle Mikkelborg, Perry Knudsen, Palle Bolvig, Allan Botschinsky & Arne Lamberth: trumpets
Per Espersen, Torolf Mølgård, Axel Windfeld, Ole Kurt Jensen & Erling Krøner: trombones
Uffe Karskov, Jesper Thilo, Erling Christensen, Bent Nielsen & Flemming Madsen: reeds
Ole Kock Hansen: piano
Ole Molin: guitar
Hugo Rasmussen: bass
Bjarne Rostvold: drums
Finn Ziegler: vibraphone
Conductor: Ray Pitts

Recorded for the Danish Radio,
November 22nd, 1971
Produced by Erik Moseholm

6. Rockin' In Rhythm
8. Stomp Jones

Palle Mikkelborg, Perry Knudsen, Palle Bolvig, Allan Botschinsky & Henry Henkel: trumpets
Poul Jørgensen, Per Espersen, Torolf Mølgård, Ole Kurt Jensen & Helmuth Hjorth Hansen: trombones
Uffe Karskov, Jesper Thilo, Erling Christensen, Bent Nielsen & Flemming Madsen: reeds
Ole Kock Hansen: piano
Ole Molin: guitar
Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen: bass
William Schiøppe: drums
Bjarne Rostvold & John Steffensen: congas
Conductor: Niels Jørgen Steen

Recorded for the Danish Radio, October
10th, 1969

Produced by Erik Moseholm

7. Things Ain't What They Used To Be
9. Cottontail

Palle Mikkelborg, Palle Bolvig, Allan Botschinsky, Arne Lamberth & Svend Lundvig: trumpets
Torolf Mølgård, Ole Kurt Jensen, Helmut Hjorth Hansen, Poul Keldgård & Kurt Järnberg: trombones
Uffe Karskov, Jesper Thilo, Erling Christensen, Bent Nielsen & Flemming Madsen: reeds
Niels Jørgen Steen: piano
Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen: bass
William Schiøppe: drums
Bjarne Rostvold & John Steffensen: congas
Conductor: Ib Glindeman

Recorded for the Danish Radio,
November 27th, 1969
Produced by Poul Clemensen

For many people Ben Webster is indelibly linked with the name of Duke Ellington. Ben had a long and distinguished career, of which his work with Duke was only a small part, but the crucial exposure just as he reached musical maturity was given by Ellington, and that maturity was hastened by the challenge of playing with Ellington. Yet he also gave a lot to the band and to the continuing Ellington tradition.

In other words, he created the role of the tenor saxophone with Duke. Before he joined for his longest stay (in January 1940), there had been no expectation of significant tenor contributions - despite

Ben's previous brief encounters in 1935 and 1936. But, in far less time than the 3½ years he remained, Ben had made the tenor an Ellingtonian voice almost as strong as Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney on alto and baritone. His departure left a huge hole in Duke's music, which was filled by a series of heavyweight soloists including Al Sears, Jimmy Forrest, Don Byas, Ben again, and the great Paul Gonsalves.

Ellington always knew how to bring the best out of his major collaborators and, whereas Webster had sounded somewhat anonymous on other people's records, with Duke he became the Ben we know and love. Like his favourite ballads (see Storyville SLP 4118), Ellington's swingers put the spotlight on his blend of two different tenor traditions. These were the luxuriant, harmonically involved outpourings perfected in the 1930s by Coleman Hawkins, and the tersely rhythmic Southwestern style originally based on Hawk's 1920s work. To these elements, Ben added tone-colours which were unusual and whose variety was unusually wide for the period.

It is no coincidence that so many tunes in his repertoire were from the Ellington book. And, indeed, several of his own favourite performances (studio and live sessions) were done while he was a member. Veteran engineer Jack Towers told me that the tenor solo on Duke's **Black, Brown And Beige**, written for Ben but only commercially recorded after his time, was a special favourite. "He would often ask me for a copy of the concert recording - the Boston version, not the Carnegie Hall - because of something he did in his intro-

duction. He certainly liked to listen to himself play."

No fewer than six of the eight Ellington numbers here were composed between 1940 and 1943, and first recorded with Ben on board. Even *Rockin' in Rhythm* and *Stompy Jones* (1930 and 1934 respectively) were still in Duke's pad – *Rockin'* stayed longer than anything else except huge hits like *Mood Indigo* – and there are air shots of both of them dating from Ben's tenure on the tenor. Given the symbiotic relationship of Ellington's writers (himself, Strayhorn, Mercer Ellington, Juan Tizol) with his sidemen, it is reasonable to say that Ben helped to create these pieces.

Cotton Tail, probably the most famous item to feature Ben, is a special case for, not only is it almost *de rigueur* for any tenor soloist to quote Ben's improvisation, the sax-section chorus which follows has been attributed (by people who should know, like Rex Stewart) to Webster as arranger. But, in a more general way, Ben described one consequence of Duke's methods: "You looked around and saw Duke scribbling on a piece of paper. Next time that lick you had invented turned up as his composition."

It's appropriate that the performances with the Danish Radio Band, apart from the simple blues *Things Ain't What They Used To Be*, are all based on the original scores. Thus Ben is not always the only soloist, with short trumpet spots on *Bojangles* and *Stompy* going to Allan Botshinsky, and clarinet and trombone on *Rockin'* by Jesper Thilo and Torolf Mølgaard. But Webster certainly gets most of the available space, and his influence is

also felt in the choice of tempos much closer to the originals than even Duke's own later versions.

More hectic is the contrasting quartet assault on the opening *Cotton Tail*, in which Niels Pedersen quotes another I Got Rhythm variant known as *Swing Spring* and based on a solo Bud Powell recorded with Cootie Williams. (Neither *Cotton Tail* is the same as on SLP 4105, by the way). Interestingly *Perdido*, which sports a complete catalogue of shakes, trills, slurs and even a honk, and *In A Mellow Tone* were recorded with Teddy Wilson, and it's often forgotten that the year before Ben joined Duke was spent with Wilson's big band – Webster was also on five of Wilson's sessions with Billie Holiday including the very first, and they were reunited on Ben's first album with strings.

But he remained an indelible part of Ellingtonia. On one of "The Guv'nor's" last trips to Europe, an extra Sunday afternoon concert was scheduled at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw for the band to play without Duke. Dutch enthusiast Donald Beck remembers that "Some of the musicians decided to get him on stage. He was so proud, sitting there with his funny little hat on."

© 1989 STORYVILLE RECORDS AB
© 1989 STORYVILLE RECORDS AB

We wish to thank the following for their help making this album possible:
The Ben Webster Foundation, Billy Moore, Henrik W. Nielsen, Ole Mathiesen, Arvid Meyer and Danmarks Radio.

Unfortunately the original tapes for most of these recordings were lost by Danmarks Radio, so without the help of private collectors this release would not have been possible.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY
Co-author of *Jazz: The Essential Companion* (Grafton/Patagon)

Liner notes: Brian Priestley
Photo: Jan Persson
Layout: Chris Olesen
Mastering: Torstudio Bauer
Executive producer:
Karl Emil Knudsen



STCD 4133

STORYVILLE

BEN WEBSTER PLAYS DUKE ELLINGTON

STCD 4133

BEN WEBSTER

PLAYS DUKE ELLINGTON

1. COTTONTAIL 4:56
D. Ellington
2. JOHNNY COME LATELY 4:47
B. Strayhorn
3. PERDIDO 8:38
Tizol - Drake - Langsfelder
4. IN A MELLOW TONE 6:58
D. Ellington
5. BOJANGLES 4:09
D. Ellington
6. ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM 5:36
D. Ellington
7. THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE 3:07
M. Ellington
8. STOMPY JONES 5:32
D. Ellington
9. COTTONTAIL 3:19
D. Ellington

© 1989 STORYVILLE RECORDS

© 1989 STORYVILLE RECORDS

STORYVILLE COMPACT disc



STCD 4133

BEN WEBSTER PLAYS DUKE ELLINGTON

STORYVILLE